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Approved for Release: 2020/09/01 C06861500

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(b)(3)

Contents

(b)(1)
(b)(3)

Liberia: Ethnic Tensions Escalate as Rebels Draw Near 9

(b)(1)
(b)(3)

(b)(3)

Approved for Release: 2020/09/01 C06861500

Approved for Release: 2020/09/01 C06861500

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(b)(3)

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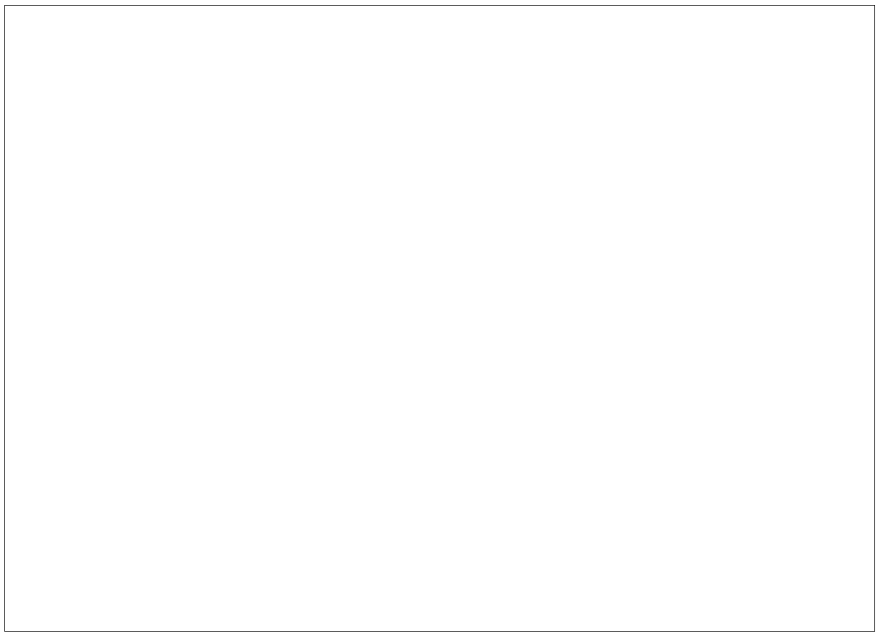

LIBERIA: Ethnic Tensions Escalate as Rebels Draw Near

Armed soldiers ransacked the UN Development Program compound in Monrovia Tuesday night, terrorizing several hundred Gio and Mano civilians seeking refuge there. Four individuals were shot, one of whom died. About 30 people were abducted, and some probably have been killed. The UNDP has decided to close its offices and evacuate remaining UN personnel. At least five other civilians were killed in separate incidents, including the son of a prominent senator from Nimba County. Meanwhile, the rebels have regained control of Buchanan; the town is calm

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Comment: The UNDP's departure from Monrovia probably will put added pressure on US Embassy officials to take an active role in protecting Gio and Mano civilians against further abuses, exposing the US to charges of abetting rebel sympathizers. Liberian citizens are likely to increasingly seek refuge at the US Embassy and Voice of America compounds. The army probably will have difficulty launching another attack on Buchanan. The insurgents' recent strategy of engaging the army on several fronts by attacking Kakata and Buchanan simultaneously appears to have spread government troops thin, allowing the rebels to regain the initiative.

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